OPTIONAL FORM NO. 10
MAY 1962 EDITION
GSA FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6
UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : Mr. W. R. Wannall

FROM : J. G. Deegan

SUBJECT: "NEWSDAY" ARTICLE ABOUT INVADERS AND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DATED FEBRUARY 1, 1976

1 - Mr. N. P. Callahan
1 - Mr. J. B. Adams
1 - Mr. D. W. Moore, Jr.

DATE: 2/24/76

1 - Mr. W. R. Wannall
1 - Mr. J. G. Deegan
1 - Mr. J. D. Powell

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This is in response to a notation by the Director on a 2/1/76 "Newsday" article which alleges that the FBI and the Memphis, Tennessee, Police Department had active informants in a violence-prone Memphis black youth group, the Invaders, and these were instrumental in instigating a riot in Memphis 3/28/68. Allegedly this riot in turn led Dr. Martin Luther King to return to Memphis in April, 1968, where he was assassinated. The Director noted "What about this group and the reported action?"

In 1967 an umbrella black power group was formed in Memphis principally known as the Black Organizing Project (BOP). One of its cells was the Invaders, composed of young blacks. This group was particularly militant. Its leaders made statements to the effect that it would be desirable to burn the city and loot. On 2/12/68 the Memphis sanitation workers began a strike. A series of demonstrations and rallies were held in support thereof and this became a black cause.

A mass parade and rally was scheduled for 3/28/68 with King as the main attraction. The BOP actively urged all black students to skip school and participate in the march. BOP leaders urged the youngsters to use sticks from placards and not to be afraid of the police. The march developed into a looting rampage with hundreds of arrests, three youths shot, one fatally and dozens of injuries. King fled the scene when he became aware of the looting that was occurring at the rear of the march. The presence of a large number of uncontrolled school age youngsters was the primary cause of the rioting.

157-8460

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ENCLOSURE

ORIGINAL FILED IN

Memorandum to Mr. W. R. Wannall
Re: "Newsday" Article About Invaders
and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Dated February 1, 1976
157-8460

Memphis had five racial or extremist informants active in March, 1968. One became a member of the Invaders shortly after the above violence [redacted] He was present during the march and he reported thereon. He did not lead the violence or participate therein. Another source was well acquainted with the Invaders. He was also present during the riot, but did not participate in the violence although he did report on it. Our informants in no way instigated the violence associated with the Invaders.

The Memphis Police Department did have an undercover officer in the Invaders. He, through the Memphis Police Department, furnished information to the FBI. He has been publicly disclosed and he is no longer with the Memphis Police Department. There is no indication in our files that he instigated the violence.

ACTION:

For information. This information is being furnished to the Department.